

**Rome as Text: Mysteries and Histories**

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

Jennifer J. Gibson

Thesis Advisor  
Dr. Joanne Edmonds

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joanne Edmonds". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J" and a stylized "E".

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## Abstract

When I traveled to London during my freshman year at Ball State, I developed a love and respect for the study of city as “text.” An independent study in Rome two years later allowed me to expand upon this idea and fall in love with another city. By reading about places in Rome and then visiting them and experiencing them personally, I was able to create an emotional and thoughtful journal. This project involves the transformation of selections of my Rome travel journal into several travel essays. Through this project, I wanted to investigate the importance of setting in various genres of literature and also to see if reading a text changed the way I viewed Rome, or vice versa.

I wound up focusing mainly on three texts: *Portrait of a Lady* by Henry James (an example of classic fiction), *Angels and Demons* by Dan Brown (an example of detective fiction), and the letters of John Keats. As a result of the writing and reflecting process, I discovered evidence of three different ways setting can function in literature. In James, it seems to accentuate a character; in Brown, it drives the entire story; and finally, in another type of story, history, it serves as a link between past and present. Reading about a particular place and then later visiting it not only makes the story seem more “real”; it also makes the setting itself more authentic.

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## ***Introduction and Background***

The roots of this project can be traced back to my freshman year at Ball State and a one week trip my Virginia Ball Center seminar group took to London, England. During the trip, I became intrigued with two essential concepts: the study of a city as “text” and the personal life of poet John Keats. Before actually traveling to London, my classmates and I read and studied several works set in London. As a result, while in the city, we were able not only to experience the city, but it was almost as if we were re-visiting a place that seemed somewhat familiar. Also, while in England, I visited John Keats’ house in Hampstead and became deeply interested in his life.

Two years later, during my junior year, I found another traveling opportunity that I couldn’t resist. Through the KIIS (Kentucky Institute for International Study) organization, I spent five glorious weeks in May and June trekking through Greece and Rome. In order to help fund the trip, I decided to apply for an Undergraduate Research Grant. During the application process, I decided that the best research project for me to conduct while abroad would be a city as “text” project, much like I had experienced in London. I met with my advisor, Dr. Joanne Edmonds, and we selected literary works, in both the classical and detective fiction genres, that I would read before the trip. Then, while in Rome, I visited many of the specific places described in the books I had read and kept an extensive travel journal, detailing my own impressions of these places. Through the project, I wanted to investigate the importance of setting in various genres of literature and also to see if reading a text changed the way I viewed Rome, or vice versa.

After returning to the States and beginning my final year at Ball State, I reflected and decided that I was proud of my travel journal and the work I had put into my

independent study in Rome. After meeting again with Dr. Edmonds, we decided that my travel journal was a great beginning for my senior thesis project. The task ahead of me (changing excerpts of my journal into “travel literature”) was more difficult than I thought it would be. Once I began writing, however, I realized that I was making connections, not only between the literature and my own writing, but also between this field study and my earlier trip to London, most notably, my interest in Keats. While in Rome, I visited the Keats-Shelley Museum and the Protestant Cemetery (where Keats is buried).

A few weeks into the year, I began planning a spring break trip back to London with Lydia Storie, one of my best friends and a former classmate from the Virginia Ball seminar, and our boyfriends. It struck me one day that while in England, I could return to Hampstead, completing the circle of my Undergraduate travels and my study of John Keats. The travel essays that follow are mostly a compilation of revised travel journal entries from Rome in the summer of 2004 as well as two from Hampstead, in March 2002 and March 2005. My complete, unedited Rome travel journal can be found in Appendix B. Appendix A contains pictures that correspond to the footnotes in the Dan Brown section.

Looking back through my travel journal now, it’s interesting to see how I responded differently to the various texts. For example, when responding to *Portrait of a Lady*, I saw Isabel Archer as the protagonist; consequently, when I referenced that novel in my journal, I was usually comparing myself to her. I found similarities between us while reading the novel, which not only made the book more exciting to read, but also inspired more excitement in me for my own Roman journey. On the other hand, in Dan

Brown's book, Rome seems to be a protagonist in and of itself. The descriptions of setting are so detailed and concrete that I was able to trace my own path through Rome using the novel. Finally, when studying Keats, I tended to focus more on my personal interest in him and his life, as I always have. As illustrated in these three examples, there are at least three different ways setting can function in literature. In James, it seems to accentuate a character; in Brown, it drives the entire story; and finally, in another type of story, history, it serves as a link between past and present. Because I knew specific places Keats had lived, I was able to visit them and feel a connection to him. The power of being in the very same places, or settings, as someone you have read about, whether it may be a fictional character or actual person, is indescribable. Reading about a particular place and then later visiting it not only makes the story seem more "real"; it also makes the setting itself more authentic.

*Keats in Hampstead: The First Encounter (March 12, 2002)*

During my freshman year at Ball State, I traveled to London with a group of other Honors freshmen and faculty and experienced one of the best weeks of my life. It opened my eyes to history, culture, friendships, and travel opportunities that have changed the course of my formal education and my life. Not only did it ignite my passion for traveling (to the continent of Europe in particular) and in a lot of ways, begin the long and significant process that has led to this senior thesis, but my time in England also marks the beginning of my love affair with John Keats.

We had been reading some Keats poetry for class. Although I remember that I enjoyed reading the poems, they were never my favorite literature. However, when I learned that during the trip, I would get the chance to visit the Keats house in Hampstead, where Keats spent part of his life, I was excited and leapt at the opportunity to connect with a literary icon. Although that was three years ago, there are certain details about that day in Hampstead that stick out in my mind. I remember that the weather was damp and windy, with a biting cold. I remember being enchanted as I walked up the footpath to the white house with the bright blue door, passing the little garden where Keats wrote “Ode to a Nightingale.” My favorite part of the house, however, was easily Fanny Brawne’s room. Fanny was the girl who lived next door, and, during Keats’ time in Hampstead, they fell in love. Unfortunately, not long after they began a love affair, Keats left Hampstead in an attempt to cure his tuberculosis and never returned.

Before that day, I didn’t know a lot about Keats’s life, but I read all about Fanny on the plaques around the room. For some reason, her story made him come alive, bringing out the best in him for me. Their story is tragic, yet so romantic. I think it’s



heartrending that she wore her engagement ring until she died, even after Keats had died and she married another man. Seeing the actual ring in a display tugged on my heartstrings. The best part, though, was the excerpt from a letter he had written to her after being away for nineteen weeks and then seeing her again. It was so perfectly poignant (better in my eyes than any of his poetry). I teared up reading it; all I remember thinking was how I wanted to be written to that way. I want to be loved that way! The letter said, “You dazzled me” (Keats 310) and talked about how wonderful the previous days with Fanny had been. The line that really dug itself a place in my heart was: “I have had a thousand kisses, for which with my whole soul I should thank love – but if you should deny me the thousand and first – ‘t would put me to the proof how great a misery I could live through” (Keats 310).

I was so inspired by Keats and Fanny and their tragic love story that I couldn’t stop thinking about them, long after Hampstead’s biting winds finally left my bones and I returned to the States. As a matter of fact, their story inspired me to write a song, which became my final project for the Virginia Ball Center seminar (which, interestingly, also marked the completion of nearly all my Honors courses). The song was entitled “To See You Again,” and the lyrics are below:

Standing here, I feel you.

All alone, I close my eyes

and remember the love I once knew,

a promise we made, so true.

To see you again, to hold you,  
feel so safe, and warm,  
to touch you again, to love you,  
I dare not wish for more.

Sitting here by the window,  
All alone, I call your name.  
And I beg your heart not to go,  
the one that I used to know.

To see you again, to hold you,  
feel so safe, and warm,  
to touch you again, to love you,  
I dare not wish for more.

Even now, after all this time,  
Swirling shadows, endless sky,  
Still I know, every heartbeat of mine  
clings to you, please hear my cry.  
Return my cry....

To see you again, to hold you,  
feel so safe, and warm,

to touch you again, to love you,

I dare not wish for more.

*These are revised excerpts from my travel journal that don't correspond to a specific author, but that I felt needed to be included in my travel literature:*

***My Initial Response to the Rome that I "Read"***

My readings of Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons*, Michael Dibdin's *Cabal*, Henry James' *Portrait of a Lady*, and Iain Pears' *The Raphael Affair* have created a sense of Rome (not just the various settings) and, so far, I'm finding something very different from what I expected. I think that, despite how realistic any writer could ever be in describing a city to me, I would always have at least a semi-romanticized vision of what it would be like. That was the case with Rome. I'm seeing graffiti all over the walls (which is interesting in a way because Rome is such a historical city, and here, we have modern travelers and people in general who feel the urge to "leave their mark" on history even today). It's so strange how the ancient is mixed right in with the modern city. For example, in front of the Coliseum (from the direction we were coming last night) are ruins of a training school for gladiators. Just ruins sitting randomly in the midst of hotels, bars, and restaurants, traffic whizzing by, life continuing around these ancient remains. It seems so awkward to me, but at the same time, wonderful! I feel like, at any turn, I could come upon another piece of history. Of course, I only arrived last night and still have an entire week before I find myself jetting off to Venice, so my impressions will probably change as I become more familiar with my surroundings. But I haven't yet found the essence of what I've read about. Maybe I never will. Cities are usually not the way I picture them to be.

***An Epiphany about the Ways We Connect with Settings and History***

*“It [the Roman experience] is a vague sense of ponderous remembrances; a perception of such weight and density in a bygone life, of which this spot was the center, that the present moment is pressed down or crowded out, and our individual affairs and interests are but half as real here as elsewhere.” – Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Marble Faun*

I want to expound on an epiphany I had in class today. We were talking about *The Marble Faun* and I perked up completely although I noticed that most of the class seemed fairly unaffected. Then I started thinking about how I’m not so excited to visit places that emperors had lived or spoken in (but that’s really exciting for other people who have studied classics and that type of history) or seeing dead popes and saints, but that I get really excited to see the places that Henry James and Dan Brown have written about, or the room that Keats lived and wrote and died in. And how just hearing Hawthorne’s beginning page of *The Marble Faun* made me so excited to visit the Capitoline museum and glimpse Rome through his eyes. I think that part of what draws us to the past is making connections not only to the *past*, but to other people in the past whom we specifically admire. For some, it’s artists or emperors or Popes; for me, it’s writers. There is something intoxicating about reading one person’s account (especially if this one person is someone you admire) of a place and then actually seeing it yourself and finding connections between how that person perceived it and how you perceive it. It’s not only about the changes in physicality of the setting. By taking another perspective, we gain a window into another’s very soul.

## ***Rome Seduces Me***

On the way to Piazza Navona today, I paused to admire Bernini's elephant sculpture (of course, with a huge obelisk on the top) and I had one of those life-altering moments where I decided that when I graduate, I want to travel around the world to foreign cities and write novels in those settings. *(As I read this later, I kind of chuckle, because really, who WOULDN'T like to do that? But at the time, surrounded by the city and perhaps, bewitched in a way, it really seemed like a possibility. I guess that is part of the magic the city holds over me.)* I really think I could do it. Cities inspire so much inside me – it's so difficult for me to even write this journal because I have so much to say and not enough time to write it all down!

## ***Parting Thoughts***

Walking back to the metro in the Roman sun after my museum visit, I gazed at the Coliseum and realized that I will probably not see it again before we leave next Tuesday. I had a silent moment with it before entering the darkness of the station. As my journey is coming to an end, I am learning another facet of traveling: the mixed feelings one experiences at the end. On one hand, I'm excited to return home to my family and friends and the comforts and conveniences of a "normal" life. On the other hand, it will be hard to leave the people I have spent every moment of my life with for the past 5 weeks and to leave behind these wonderful foreign places and the adventures that accompany being a traveler. Just as I miss the wonderful concept of "free refill" now, I will miss the concept of "siesta" in a week or so. And so on. I guess this is one of the experiences every traveler must face. It's just never easy to say goodbye.

### ***Isabel Archer***

As I crossed the street and walked across the cobblestones next to the Coliseum and towards the Roman forum, I was reminded of one of my favorite quotes from *Portrait of a Lady*: “she had always been fond of history, and here was history in the stones of the street and the atoms of the sunshine” ( James 245). I remember that as I was reading the book (especially at the beginning), Isabel Archer reminded me of me. She seemed to really soak in the history and essence of the city, and that’s what I feel like I have been doing. Also, like me, before leaving on her European journey, Isabel longs for a change of scene and the decision to come to Europe makes her feel independent and liberated, something that I and probably lots of other travelers experience before leaving the country. Because of this connection I feel I have with Isabel, I was sure to sit on a “prostrate column” (James 246) in the forum by myself for awhile today and collect my thoughts as she does during her visit there. Again, like Isabel, I “went about in a repressed ecstasy of contemplation, often seeing in the things she looked at a great deal more than was there” (James 245).

### ***Isabel Archer at the Capitoline Museum (in the Room of the Dying Gladiator)***

*“She sat down in the centre of the circle of these presences, regarding them vaguely, resting her eyes on their beautiful blank faces; listening, as it were, to their eternal silence. It is impossible, in Rome at least, to look long at a great company of Greek sculptures without feeling the effect of their noble quietude; which, as with a high door closed for the ceremony, slowly drops on the spirit the large white mantle of peace.*

*I say in Rome especially, because the Roman air is an exquisite medium for such impressions. The golden sunshine mingles with them, the deep stillness of the past, so vivid, yet, though it is nothing but a void full of names, seems to throw a solemn spell upon them”* (James 258).

Like Isabel, I found the company of the Greek sculptures in that room of the Capitoline museum to be comforting. I seemed to be one with Isabel’s soul – or was it merely my own? – as I sat by myself (for what was it? 30 or 40 or 50 minutes?) on a bench by the window. These days, the view from the room of the Dying Gaul in the Capitoline museum is breathtaking, but different from what Nathaniel Hawthorne describes in *The Marble Faun*. One can still see the steps (which I walked up to get here), and the arch of Septimus Severus with the Forum and Coliseum, and, way off in the distance, the Alban Mountains in the background. Unfortunately, the washer women have been replaced with hundreds of tourists in vividly colored t-shirts jabbering in twelve different languages and the Forum is not so “desolate” anymore. However, as I sit here, perched out over the city, I do get that pronounced feeling of awareness of history which Hawthorne ever so eloquently describes. Perhaps even more so, the blaring evidence of modernity strikes a contrast that seems to enhance the importance of the past. I also gave myself some time to just be alone with myself. Like Isabel, I was an independent woman in Rome, alone with her thoughts in a city where there is “history in the stones of the street and the atoms of the sunshine” (James 245).

While sitting next to the Gladiator and thinking back to some of the statements James made about Isabel, I realized that we had much in common; in fact, some of the ways he described her outlook of Rome might as well have been written about me. For



example, “She had an imagination that kindled at the mention of great deeds, and wherever she turned some great deed had been acted” (245). Other than the years of time that separate us (which don’t seem to matter much in that city, surrounded by such triumphant achievements of the ancient world), I also didn’t have to worry about my own Gilbert Osmond appearing to interrupt my meditations. As a matter of fact, I really didn’t have to worry about anyone or anything at all. I was truly independent.

### ***Isabel in the Roman Forum***

*“The sun had begun to sink, the air was a golden haze, and the long shadows of broken column and vague pedestal leaned across the field of ruin” (James 245).*

This descriptive passage comes when Isabel is sitting on a “prostrate column” in the Forum and reflecting. Looking back at the passage now, I can’t help but feel amused and pleasantly surprised to read something I had forgotten in all my excitement over traveling. While sitting in the Forum, surrounded by “rugged relics of the Roman past that lay scattered about her” ( James 245), Isabel was thinking about herself. I love that because I remember feeling guilty during my own visit to the Forum because my mind was on other things. I appreciated being in the midst of so much history, but at the end of a five week trip that had begun in Athens, I had seen more than my fair share of ancient ruins. I was still humbled by the experience of being there, but I certainly didn’t spend as much time pondering the ruins of the past as I could have. As a matter of fact, I distinctly remember being there with a friend and being lost in a conversation about love and dating while wandering the Forum.

*“From the Roman past to Isabel Archer’s future was a long stride, but her imagination had taken it in a single flight and now hovered in slow circles over the nearer and richer field”* (James 246). That day, I was very much like Isabel Archer in the Roman Forum, without even realizing it.

### ***Isabel in St. Peter’s Cathedral***

*“She had not been one of the superior tourists who are ‘disappointed’ in Saint Peter’s and find it smaller than its fame; the first time she passed beneath the huge leathern curtain that strains and bangs at the entrance, the first time she found herself beneath the far-arching dome and saw the light drizzle down through the air thickened with incense and with the reflection of marble and gilt, of mosaic and bronze, her conception of greatness rose and dizzily rose . . . she gazed and wondered like a child”* (James 251).

Like Isabel, I cannot fathom how one could be disappointed in St. Peter’s. The square itself was breathtaking enough, but when I entered the basilica, I was awestruck. Not only is it chock full of Bernini sculptures and the flamboyant Baldacchino, but the pure vastness of the room and heavy sense of religion and history weighed heavy upon me. Standing under the dome and slowly making a circle and gazing in all directions, I realized that, as with much of Rome, no matter how many hours I spent in Saint Peter’s, I would never be satisfied.

*Keats in Rome (June 23, 2004)*

Having visited Keats's home in Hampstead during my freshman year and becoming intrigued by him and his love affair with Fanny Brawne, this modest memorial [The Keats-Shelley museum] was magical to me. I didn't pay as much attention to the Shelley portion of the museum, though there were some first editions of some of his works and Byron's "Don Juan," which I drooled over. But Keats is the one who truly captivates me. I spent quite awhile sitting in his little room, the room he lived in from October of 1820 when he came to Rome until February of 1821 when he died, just a few months later. I put myself in Keats's shoes and imagined the way his Rome would have been much different from mine, not only in appearance, but also circumstance. I came here to study and experience the city; he came here to try to get healthy, but ultimately, to die. He came to Rome, having already lost many of the people he cared about, namely his brothers Tom and George (one to tuberculosis, which ran in their family, and the other to America), and left his beloved sister, Fanny Keats, and his one true love, Fanny Brawne, who waited steadfastly for his letters in Hampstead. Sitting in the tiny room and looking out the window over the Spanish Steps, he must have thought of her, longed for her. He must have thought about his life: his joys, his regrets.

He wrote letters there and eventually declined further and died in the arms of his friend Joseph Severn, whom he lived with for those months in Rome. I learned that after his death, the Vatican authorities ordered that everything in the room, including the wallpaper, be burned because it was contaminated with tuberculosis. I did get to see the original ceiling tiles, though. Other treasures I saw in the stuffy apartment where Keats

spent his final days: several letters, a first edition of *Endymion*, portraits, and a life and death mask (kind of morbid, yet fascinating).

I felt a rush of desperation in my moments in that apartment, similar to the feelings I remember having in the house in Hampstead, only different, stronger, because I have somehow forged a deeper relationship with Keats since then. Standing in those rooms where he spent the last days of his life, I could feel his presence and that feeling gave me chills. I closed my eyes and prayed that I would remember every detail.

A few days later, I was able to visit the Protestant Cemetery in Rome and Keats's grave. The cemetery was filled with flowers and greenery and was very serene. The first thing I noticed was that Joseph Severn was buried right next to Keats, as if he continues to watch over him and be by his side even in death. I performed the typical rituals: studied the grave itself and copied down the inscription, which oddly enough, doesn't even mention his name. It merely says, "This grave contains all that was mortal of a young English poet who, on his death bed, in the bitterness of his Heart, at the malicious power of his enemies, Desired these words to be engraven on his tombstone. 'Here lies one whose was writ in Water.' February 24 1821."

After walking around the rest of the cemetery, I found myself drawn back to Keats and, to my delight, I was able to spend fifteen or twenty glorious moments alone with him. To try to describe that time in prose would belittle the experience, so I will include the poem that I wrote (with and for Keats):

Alone at last  
with Keats  
just a few precious moments

to sit with him  
in this final rest  
having already visited his room  
and felt the same bittersweet

Yearning

he felt all those years ago  
for a love far across the sea  
that I have dreamed about

Now

I find that we are

Finally

not so distant.

### ***Re-tracing Dan Brown's Footsteps throughout Rome***

Before embarking upon my journey throughout Rome, I read a number of books, including Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons*. Brown's book follows symbologist Robert Langdon as he travels through the city, tracing the path of the elusive Illuminati. The Illuminati are an ancient secret brotherhood who surface in the novel in order to take revenge against their long-time enemy, the Catholic church. In order to try to save the Vatican, Langdon must trace a path (marked by symbols, of course) through the city of Rome that will ultimately lead him to the Illuminati lair. Central to the novel and Illuminati symbology are the artist Bernini, obelisks, the number five, and the shape of an ellipse.

Upon my arrival in Rome, the first places where I wanted to go were the ones described in Brown's book. I find the connection between reading about a particular setting, or place, and then personally seeing it, experiencing it, powerful. As a matter of fact, it has become the core of my project. What follows is my account of the settings in *Angels and Demons*: "Jenny Re-tracing Brown's Footsteps throughout Rome."

On my very first day in Rome, I set out on a search for the Rome of Dan Brown. When I first emerged from the underground metro at my destination (Piazza Barberini), I was immediately transported to the Rome of Dan Brown. Bernini's *Tritone* fountain<sup>1</sup> stood in the center of the elliptical piazza, and when I raised my eyes towards the sky, I saw giant yellow letters spelling out "Bernini" atop the Hotel Bernini<sup>2</sup>. It was so exciting to finally really be in one of the places I had read about! We didn't make it to the Santa Maria della Vittoria to see Bernini's *Ecstasy of St. Theresa*, but it's on the agenda for

later. I wandered around and tried to imagine myself on a race to save the four cardinals and the world.

Next, I picked my way over winding cobblestoned streets to the Pantheon. Again, I lost my breath when I got my first glimpse of the outside<sup>3</sup>. At the front of another square jam-packed with people (a band was playing on the other side and people were crowded around, enjoying the atmosphere and the music), it stood, dotted with bullet holes at the top from its old days of being used as a firing range. The inscription at the top reads “M Agrippa L F Cos Tertium Fecit,” “Marcus Agrippa, consul for the third time, built this.” I immediately thought of Langdon’s ironic observation regarding the inscription: “So much for humility” (Brown 239).

I remember reading *Angels and Demons* and wondering if I would feel a chill of awe as I entered the Pantheon as Langdon does, and I did. Brown describes the air inside as “cool and damp, heavy with history” (Brown 240) and I felt that, even in the midst of hundreds of tourists. The first thing I noticed was the oculus at the top<sup>4</sup>, what Langdon mistook for the “demon’s hole.” I gazed through it for a few moments, admiring the architectural genius of the church, which was originally built as a tribute to Gaea, goddess of the Earth. According to Brown, the proportions are so exact that a giant spherical globe could fit inside the building with less than a millimeter to spare (Brown 225). After admiring the oculus, I noticed the “rientranzes,” niches in the walls where statues to Olympian gods had been (they were later removed and destroyed when the Vatican took over and made it a Christian church) and imagined the fear of wondering whether an assassin was hiding in the shadows<sup>5</sup>. It was a little tricky to get into the right mood with so many tourists around; maybe that is one of the flaws with Brown’s book.

To the left and back of the entrance is Raphael's ornate tomb<sup>6</sup>, which I paused to admire before taking my last glances around the Pantheon and exiting back into the sunlight.

After leaving the Pantheon, I rounded out my walk with a visit to Piazza Navona, home of Bernini's *Fountain of the Four Rivers* and site of one of the murders in *Angels and Demons*. I don't mean to be morbid, but after reading that book, I keep finding myself looking for good murder settings for my own stories.

Dusk was about to cloak Rome and there I was, in Piazza Navona, admiring the Fountain<sup>7</sup>. I studied each corner: Ganges, Nile, Danube, and Rio del Plata, and imagined Langdon struggling with the Hassassin for his life in the fountain's churning waters. I didn't catch the aura of "fearful sorcery" (Brown 408) that Brown describes emanating from the fountain, but then again, I wasn't chasing a murderer. I was surrounded by friends and about 2,000 tourists who were sitting by the fountain or taking pictures or buying jewelry and tacky t-shirts from one of the many vendors packing the Piazza. I was sure to notice the pure height of the fountain, crowned, of course by an obelisk and a dove (symbol for the angel of peace, which points Langdon to the Illuminati lair)<sup>8</sup>.

The next morning, I hiked over to the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, home of the much anticipated *Ecstasy of St. Theresa* by Bernini (and one of the Illuminati's 4 altars of science, according to Brown). Brown describes the sculpture as "some sort of pornographic still life" (Brown 373) and I don't think that's exactly the way I'd describe it, but there is definitely something striking about the almost pleased look on Theresa's face as the angel prepares to thrust the arrow into her<sup>9</sup>. The whole church was ornate and beautiful, full of paintings and sculptures, but for some reason, I was drawn to just stare at the *Ecstasy of St. Theresa*. I also looked around and imagined the struggles of



Langdon and Vittoria with the Hassassin and the huge fire engulfing one of the cardinals near the altar, which was difficult to do in a place so peaceful.

Quick fact: according to Brown, the subway stop at Piazza Barberini<sup>10</sup> is a controversial stop because when they were putting it in, art historians were afraid the digging would topple the multi-ton obelisk in the center of the piazza, so city planners removed the obelisk and that is why the *Tritone* Fountain stands there now (Brown 355). In Bernini's day, the piazza contained an obelisk to help Christian pilgrims to find the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, which is just a short walk from the piazza.

### ***While sitting in the Santa Maria Del Popolo Church***

Sitting in the Santa Maria del Popolo church, I have chills, and it's not only because of the astounding mix of Renaissance and Baroque artwork that decorates this place. It's also (even more so!) for the curious reason that this was the first altar of science in *Angels and Demons*. As I look to my left now, I see the Raphael/Bernini Chigi Chapel and my heart starts beating faster. It's interesting to question why we are so captivated and obsessed with history and the past, but now another question poses itself to me: why is it nearly as exciting (or more) for me to visit real places from a fictional novel?

Upon entering the church, the first thing I wanted to do was locate the Chigi chapel and Bernini's *Habbakuk and the Angel* sculpture. Once I did, I couldn't help but smile and my heart leapt in excitement as I noticed the pyramids on either side of the chapel and the "demon's hole" on the floor<sup>11</sup>. I even did that annoying thing tourists do: I bent down and touched it. And I closed my eyes and imagined myself into the story and I got this incredible rush. I think the appeal is the desire to be a part of another world or

another life, part of the reason we read books and watch movies. This goes for my new realization of my excitement over experiencing the settings of books and our desire to visit historical sites. It's also interesting to see that the writer really was telling the truth, especially in the case of Dan Brown. It's so fascinating to me that he visited all the places I'm visiting and got to know Rome well enough to notice all these tiny details and weave them into a novel.

For example, in class we talk about the Egyptian obelisks all over Rome and how they signified churches to visit for traveling Christian pilgrims. I learned that they are spoils of Rome's imperial plundering. Brown adds a whole new spin on them, making them, and other famous sculptures and bits of architecture, all pawns of the elusive Illuminati. It's brilliant. We also talked in class today about how architecture is used for communication, and my goodness! That's all this book is! That's why it's a fabulous companion for a modern traveler in Rome. Brown has taken already famous and noteworthy sites around the city and given them a whole new significance: communicating the path through Rome to the secret Illuminati lair. Back to Raphael and Bernini's Chigi Chapel in the Santa Maria del Popolo Church:

The first thing I looked for in the chapel was Bernini's *Habakkuk and the Angel* statue<sup>12</sup> and I was shocked to see that the pointing finger of the angel (which guided Illuminati to the next altar of science) was broken off! Brown doesn't mention that in his book, so I wonder if someone read the book and stole it as a souvenir. I then noticed the two ten foot tall pyramids on either side of the chapel, uncharacteristic of the Christian Bernini (until we learn he is Illuminati). I also look up into the stunning cupola and notice the stars and zodiac signs and realize that it is a very "earthly" chapel, just as

Brown describes (Brown 268). But maybe the most surreal part of the chapel for me was when I looked down and saw the covering to the “demon’s hole,” the Chigi tomb where the first cardinal was found murdered. The lid depicts a skeleton carrying a tablet portraying a shining star (source of Illuminati) over a pyramid. I shivered and began to wonder if the path of Illuminati really does exist; it almost seems too accurate to be made up. Another creepy detail was that Brown describes the church as being under heavy construction in the novel. While the construction wasn’t heavy and the church was open, there were areas inside the church that were blocked off for construction. It was eerie! Stepping out of the church and into the sunlight of the Piazza del Popolo, I spotted (of course!) a giant obelisk in the midst of the elliptical piazza.

Reflecting back in my hotel room later that night, I realized that Dan Brown captured an observation I share about the forum: he says that “the decaying columns looked like toppled gravestones in a cemetery that had somehow avoided being swallowed by the metropolis surrounding it” (Brown 119). That passage really resounded with me today because as I looked at the ruins and the Coliseum, I thought again how disjointed it seems to see this bustling city, and yet, right in the middle of traffic and hundreds of thousands of people, these colossal ruins. Then I started thinking about the concept of Rome as “one big museum,” and I find it a pretty accurate statement. Considering that there is a Bernini fountain and historic obelisk in every piazza and ruins that can surprise one around any given corner, and the way that even the ceilings of museums are works of art, and the way that churches are visited with awe and appreciation from even atheists due to the tremendous artwork they contain, it certainly seems true; however I don’t see this as a negative thing at all. I think it’s wonderful. To

be surrounded by art and history at the same time as being in a thriving city is fantastic. What more could one ask for?

Deep breath. I went to St. Peter's today. This was huge for me. First, for the obvious reasons: it's incredible and beautiful. But second, it's a major setting in *Angels and Demons*. The square was enormous and definitely humbling. Because of Dan Brown, I was sure to note the elliptical shape and huge obelisk (of Caligula) in the center, flanked by a fountain on each side, in perfect elliptical distance of course (thanks to Bernini). I forgot to look for the elliptical *West Ponente* of Bernini in the square, but I will when I go for the Papal audience tomorrow morning. The square was full of people, so it wasn't tough to imagine it packed with media, like in Brown's book. The square was impressive, and then I went inside the basilica. I can honestly say that it was like nothing I've ever seen. I've heard people talk about disappointment in it, and I just can't comprehend the possibility of that. My first view of the basilica was actually from inside the cupola because we decided to climb to the top of the dome. I'm so glad we did! It was so cool to look down on the basilica from above and then to go back inside the walls and climb higher to reach the top and my outside view of Rome. It was quite a climb – at some points, the walls are really narrow and the stairway slants! On the way back down, I got dizzy on all the spiral stairs and started to feel a little claustrophobic, but it was comforting at the same time to reach out and touch the wall and know what beauty lay on the other side.

Once I got to the top outside and took one look at the view, all the huffing and puffing and burning I felt in my calves was worth it! I saw the whole city<sup>13</sup>! I picked out the Castel St. Angelo (a.k.a. the Illuminati lair) right away; it was next to the Tiber. And I

could see the Alban Mountains in the distance. I also got my only glimpse of the rest of Vatican City from there. It was surreal because it was so green and manicured and empty! Detective fiction author Michael Dibdin talks about the Vatican being too perfect and calls it “Rome devoid of Romans” (Dibdin 104). I really got that sense when I looked down on it from St. Peter’s. Bizarre: “like a replica everyone was conspiring to pass off as the real thing” (Dibdin 104).

Back on the ground, I almost ran through the crypts quickly on the way out of St. Peter’s. I mostly wanted to see the gold tomb dedicated to Saint Peter (which I found). I wish so much that I could get a special permit to get down into the necropolis “terra santa” and look for the tomb of St. Peter. He is supposedly directly below the dome – on the real Vatican Hill, all the way underground. But even few clergy have been there and it’s very easy to get lost. I really want to go down and see if there really is something in the spot where Brown says there is! *The Christian relic*. According to Brown, the Vatican was literally built upon St. Peter, “the rock” (Brown 488). That thought has been piquing my curiosity all day.

The next morning, I found *West Ponente* in St. Peter’s square. Sure enough, there are five gusts of wind, perfect elliptical shape, and two stars. Dan Brown brilliance. After observing it and catching my last glimpses of St. Peter’s, I walked down the Via to the Castel St. Angelo<sup>14</sup>. It was magnificent. The first thing I spotted was Bernini’s angel perched atop the roof, pointing his sword straight down<sup>15</sup> (indicating, according to Dan Brown, the Illuminati lair). I walked around the castle, trying to imagine all its various uses: Hadrian’s tomb, a fortress, a papal hideout, a prison for enemies of the church, and now, a museum. I considered going inside for a tour, but I didn’t have enough time and I

doubt I would be able to see the parts I would want to see from *Angels and Demons*. I also thought of Il passeto, the passageway that leads underground from the Vatican to the castle and wondered if I had been walking over it on my way to the castle. Then I walked down Bernini's Bridge of Angels<sup>16</sup> and looked up at the castle and then to St. Peter's in the distance. All by myself, I was able to imagine myself in the book, racing against time. "Let angels guide you on your lofty quest" (Brown 222). Those words echoed eerily in my mind, even in broad daylight, amongst tourists and men selling purses and sunglasses, as I walked back across the bridge towards the castle. It loomed ahead of me, full of history, secrets, and mystery.

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*Keats in Hampstead – Completing the Circle (March 11, 2005)*

Sitting in Keats' bedroom in Hampstead for the second time, I feel a strange chill throughout my body. He is with me. I feel his spirit and that of the devoted Fanny as I walk these halls and look upon some of her possessions again. Tears come to my eyes as I again see the engagement ring she wore, even after Keats' death and her marriage to another man. And I smile as I read about the macho way Keats first tried to deny and fight against his developing love for Fanny (it's comforting to know that even the most romantic of poets hides from his emotions at times). He actually moved from Hampstead to Westminster for awhile to be a journalist, but wound up missing her too much. He then moved back to Fanny and experienced the most productive part of his poetic career while with her.

It's exciting to be back in the place which is indeed the catalyst for so much of my fascination. Keats and Fanny walked the Heath together many times in the midst of their love, just as I did with my love, Brian, today. I wonder if they felt the biting winds at their necks as we did. I also sat in the first floor sitting room where Keats had a bed made up for him to watch the Heath after he was too ill to move about. Just as in Rome, I feel him with me. The magical story of his love for Fanny seems to have followed me for these three years. It is no less poignant or momentous today; however, I feel strangely satisfied. It's as if returning to this place just weeks before my graduation has provided some sort of closure for me. I once wrote that I wanted, craved, the desperate love expressed by Keats for Fanny. I think that I can sigh in contentment this time, because I have found that love, both through a three year exploration of Keats and through the formation of a loving relationship of my own.

Though it would be wonderful to be in love with a poet who might write such eloquent and passionate letters to me, I think I have finally realized that I can finish my undergraduate college experience satisfied, because in a way, I have found my own Keats.

Throughout a three year period which began with my first visit to London and fascination with Keats, continued on throughout my trip to Greece and Rome, and is now concluding after my return to London (and Paris and Ireland), I have also found a new part of myself. I have discovered the part of me that loves to travel. There is now a significant part of me who yearns for nothing more than to see new places, especially after reading about them. As my undergraduate college career is drawing to a close, there are, of course, many achievements for me to look back upon and be proud of and there are many memories for me to cherish; however, there is also this unique timeline of travel experiences that I can trace through photographs, memories, and most importantly, my own writing. It is taken for granted that any college graduate will be able to look back over her years of schooling and observe how much she has changed and grown as an intellectual and as an individual. I love that I can relate so much of my growth to my travels, which all began in March of 2002, with a one week trip to London and a study of a poet named John Keats and ended in March of 2005 with a one week trip to London and a continued study of a poet named John Keats. Because of this, I feel justified in thinking of London and Keats as the core of my educational experiences here at Ball State and I just adore that thought. I'd like to think that Keats would approve: *"My Creed is Love and you are its only tenet – You have ravish'd me away by a Power I cannot resist"* (Keats 311).



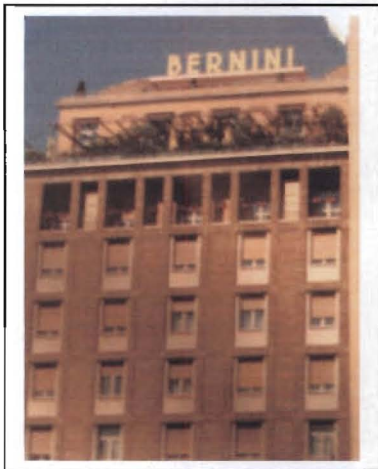
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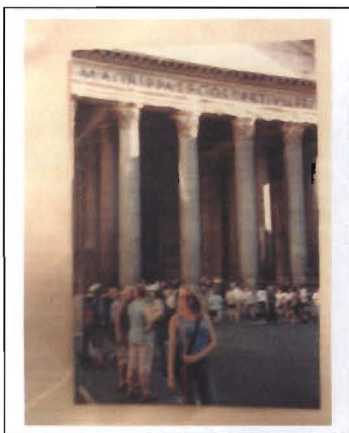
## Appendix A – My Photographs of Dan Brown Settings



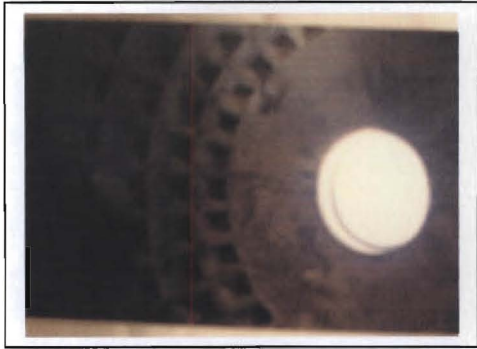
1) Bernini's *Tritone* Fountain in Piazza Barberini



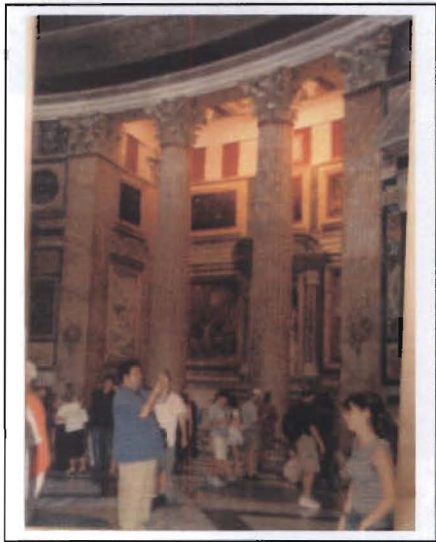
2) Hotel Bernini in Piazza Barberini



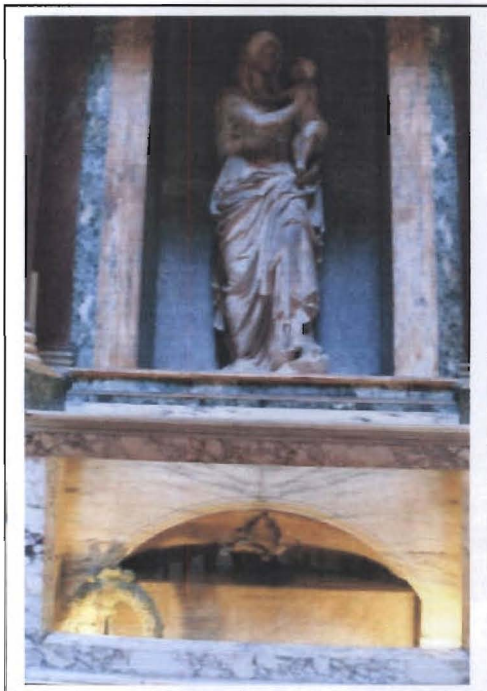
3) Jenny standing in front of the Pantheon



4) The oculus inside the Pantheon



5) Inside the Pantheon: "rientranzes"



6) Raphael's tomb inside the Pantheon



7) Bernini's *Fountain of the Four Rivers*



8) Obelisk on top of the Fountain



9) Bernini's *Ecstasy of St. Theresa*



10) Piazza Barberini



11) The “demon’s hole” in the Chigi Chapel



12) Bernini's *Habakkuk and the Angel*





13) St. Peter's Square from the top of St. Peter's



14) Castel St. Angelo



15) Bernini's angel on the top (sword pointing down)



16) The Bridge of Angels (leading across the Tiber to the Castel)

## Appendix B – Rome Travel Journal

6/18/04

Well, here I am in Rome! I really can hardly believe I'm here. I've been looking forward to this part of the trip in particular for so long – it's unbelievable that the moment has actually arrived. But it has! Last night, after unpacking and eating a delicious dinner of "bruschetta al pomodoro" (with tomatoes) and "pizza 4 formaggio" (4 cheese pizza), I saw the Coliseum! It *does* exist! The magical vision of it lit up in the night hearkened back to my first sight of Big Ben in London – that was at night too. We were too exhausted to do much but gaze at it in wonder for a few minutes and take pictures, then stumble back to our hotel through Esquiline Park. I learned that it is one of the 7 hills of Rome and that Nero had a mansion on those grounds, and it was so big that the Coliseum now covers what was Nero's pond! And trust me, the Coliseum is...well, colossal! ☺

We only saw about 1/3 of it. As we were walking back to our hotel last night, I couldn't help but to start collecting my initial impressions of the city. My readings of *Angels and Demons*, *Cabal*, *Portrait of a Lady*, and the Iain Pears novel have created a sense of Rome (not just the various settings) and, so far, I'm finding something very different from what I expected. I think that, despite how realistic any writer could ever be in describing a city to me, I would always have at least a semi-romanticized vision of what it would be like. That was the case with Rome. I'm seeing graffiti all over the walls (which is interesting in a way because Rome is such a historical city, and here, we have modern travelers and people in general who feel the urge to "leave their mark" on history even today). It's so strange how the ancient is mixed right in with the modern city. For example, in front of the Coliseum (from the direction we were coming last night) are



ruins of a training school for gladiators – just ruins sitting randomly in the midst of hotels, bars, and restaurants – traffic whizzing by, life continuing around these ancient remains. It seems so awkward to me, but at the same time – wonderful! I feel like, at any turn, I could come upon another piece of history ☺ Of course, I only arrived last night and still have an entire week before I find myself jetting off to Venice (yay!), so my impressions will probably change as I become more familiar with my surroundings. But, I haven't found the essence of what I've read about yet – maybe I never will. Cities are usually never the way I picture them to be. *{Looking back, it seems really strange that I wrote that...it doesn't seem possible that I felt that way...it seems almost disappointed...which I guess was probably because on my first night there, I was exhausted and maybe not quite ready to allow myself to be charmed by the city just yet...}*

6/18/04

11:00 PM – First full day in Rome!

After a long morning of working and class, I had a much needed McDonald's lunch – it comforted me and satiated my “Mac Attack”. While Lisa and Evita and I were eating, this old homeless (I think) Italian man sat down next to me and started eating ketchup and salt. It was kind of weird, but we decided to just ignore it. After a few minutes, he asked me where I was from. He seemed nice enough, so I started talking him, which was difficult because he spoke very little English and I speak no Italian. Suddenly, he started raising his voice and laughing semi-maniacally and gesturing at us. We tried to give him some French fries, but he wouldn't take them. I decided it was getting too weird so we left.

A little later, (after successfully finding an internet café and the wonderful 5 euro for 3 hour phone cards), I went on the “group walk.” This turned out to be wonderful because I got to see places that finally made me feel like I was in Rome. ☺ I am starting to see and sense and feel the Rome that I have been reading about: the worlds created by Dan Brown and Henry James seem not so far off. We began with our first Roman metro ride. It was yucky – really crowded and dirty. Worse than New York and definitely worse than the London underground of which I am so fond. Diane even got her phone stolen! But I was very careful and didn’t get robbed.

When we emerged from underground at our destination (Piazza Barberini!), I was immediately transported to the Rome of Dan Brown. Bernini’s Tritone fountain stood in the center of the elliptical piazza and when I raised my eyes towards the sky, I saw giant yellow letters spelling out “Bernini” atop the Hotel Bernini. It was so exciting to finally really be in one of the paces I read about! We didn’t make it to the Santa Maria della Vittoria to see the Ecstasy of St. Theresa, but that will happen today! I wandered around and tried to imagine myself on a race to save the four cardinals and the world. ☺.... From the piazza, we walked down a few colorful Roman streets to Trevi Fountain. On the way, my transformation to the “real” Rome was complete. First of all, the streets were the wonderful cobblestone I have been reading about and looking forward to. Then, as we passed numerous outdoor cafes and tempting gelaterias, we saw an accordion player! It was perfect. The streets were kind of thin, like in some places the two buildings yearned to embrace like unrequited lovers – and they wound in and out until we suddenly emerged into full blazing sunlight again and I got my first glimpse of the Bernini’s Trevi Fountain in all its glory. It was huge and gorgeous! People were packed all around it –

everyone was eager to bask in its glory. The water pouring from the statues and splashing into the pool looked so refreshing – I couldn't help but push through the crowd and dip my hand into the cool water. I was also sure to throw a coin in over my shoulder to ensure that I will one day return to Rome. Very enchanting....

Next, we picked our way over more cobblestoned streets to the Pantheon. Again, my breath was taken away when I got my first glimpse of the outside. At the front of another square jampacked with people (a band was playing on the other side and people were crowded around, enjoying the atmosphere and the music), it stood- dotted with bullet holes at the top from its old days of being used as a firing range. The inscription at the top reads "M Agrippa L F Cos Tertium Fecit", "Marcus Agrippa, consul for the third time, built this". "so much for humility" ☺ I remember reading *Angels and Demons* and wondering if I would feel a chill of awe as I entered the Pantheon like Langdon does – and I did. Brown describes the air inside as "cool and damp, heavy with history" and I felt that, even in the midst of hundreds of tourists. The first thing I noticed was the oculus at the top – what Langdon mistook for the "demon's hole." I gazed through it for a few moments, admiring the architectural genius of the church, which was originally built as a tribute to Gaea, goddess of the Earth. According to Brown, the proportions are so exact that a giant spherical globe could fit inside the building with less than a mm to spare. After admiring the oculus, I noticed the "rientrances", niches in the walls where statues to Olympian gods had been (they were later removed and destroyed when the Vatican took over and made it a Christian church) and imagined the fear of wondering whether an assassin was hiding in the shadows. It was a little tricky to get into the right mood with so many tourists around – maybe that is one of the flaws with Brown's book.

To the left and back of the entrance is Raphael's ornate tomb, which I paused to admire before taking my last glances around the Pantheon and exiting back into the sunlight.

In true Italian fashion, I paused in my journey long enough to buy some exquisite gelato in a very colorful gelateria from a nice man who kept calling me beautiful ☺ I also drank from the fountain, but only with the help of one of the nice guards after I sprayed water all over the place ☺ Apparently, I wasn't putting my thumb in the correct spot ☺ Ok, quick backtrack. I skipped something. Before the Pantheon, we stopped in the Piazza di St. Ignazio (where I got to hear the bells of St. Ignazio like in *The Raphael Affair* – I also got a picture of the carabinieri station where Bottando might have worked!). Directly across the street from the station was a colossal church, which we entered and I couldn't help but gasping out loud. The ceiling was covered in gorgeous painting (as was the rest of the church). It made me even more anxious and excited to see the Sistine Chapel. The entire church was extravagant – and someone told me that it was fairly contemporary, but if the rest of the churches are anything like this (as I'm sure they will be!), I can understand why Christian pilgrims would have flocked to Rome to see them! I think it would have been very difficult to stand in such an awe inspiring sanctuary and not feel any divine presence....

After leaving the Pantheon, we rounded out our walk with a visit to Piazza Navona, home of Bernini's 4 Rivers Fountain and one of the murders in *Angels and Demons*. I don't mean to be morbid, but after reading that book, I keep finding myself looking for good murder settings for my own stories...On the way to Piazza Navona today, I paused to admire Bernini's elephant sculpture (of course, with a huge obelisk on the top) and I had one of those life-altering moments where I decided that when I

graduate, I want to travel around the world to foreign cities and write novels in those settings. *{As I read this now, I kind of chuckle...because really, who WOULDN'T like to do that?? But at the time, surrounded by the city and perhaps, bewitched in a way, it really seemed like a possibility...i guess that is part of the magic the city holds over me}* I really think I could do it. Cities inspire so much inside me – it's so difficult for me to even write this journal because I have so much to say and not enough time to write it all down! Anyway – digressions..back to Piazza Navona.

Dusk was about to cloak Rome and there I was, in Piazza Navona, admiring the Fountain. I studied each corner – Ganges, Nile, Danube, and Rio del Plata, and imagined Langdon struggling with the Hassassin for his life in the fountain's churning waters. I didn't catch the aura of "fearful sorcery" that Brown describes emanating from the fountain, but then again, I wasn't chasing a murderer – I was surrounded by friends and about 2,000 tourists who were sitting by the fountain or taking pictures or buying jewelry and tacky t-shirts from one of the many vendors packing the Piazza. I was sure to notice the pure height of the fountain, crowned, of course by an obelisk and a dove (symbol for the angel of peace – which points Langdon to the Illuminati lair – it was very exciting!)

After admiring the fountain for awhile and wandering around and soaking in the essence of the Piazza, we left to wander the streets of Rome. Had I been an 18<sup>th</sup> century pilgrim, I could have traced the obelisks from Piazza Barberini to the church at Piazza di St. Ignazio (where the church wouldn't have been built yet), to the Pantheon (which the Vatican turned into a Christian church) and end with the 20 foot high obelisk atop Bernini's 4 Rivers Fountain in Piazza Navona (using the elephant obelisk as a guide along the way).

For dinner, we wound up at a comfy trattoria where I ate some delicious gnocchi with tomato sauce. We finally found our way back to our hotel Quisisana in the roman night. We passed through the Republica – which was majestic – rounded walls (now containing a movie theatre, McDonald’s and hotels) and, of course, a fountain as a centerpiece. Our aching feet prohibited us from lingering here. After arriving home 20 minutes later, I collapsed into bed and a deep sleep almost immediately.

6/19/04

Here I am, at the end of another wonderful day in Rome. Immediately after class today, me and some girls had a wonderful time eating lunch at Hard Rock café. It was so refreshing to be there – I love being immersed in new cultures, don’t get me wrong, but it was so nice to for once be able to read a menu entirely in English, not pay for “bread” or “cover” and eat mashed potatoes and nachos ☺ Oh yes – and Pepsi from a fountain with ice and (heaven forbid!) FREE REFILLS ☺ Yes, the Fat Happy American syndrome was in full effect today and I loved every minute of it. After lunch, the 7 of us walked to the Spanish Steps. The view of the city from the top of the steps was picturesque, but as we made our way down the stairs, we were faced with the reality of being there on a Saturday afternoon. It was packed with people, all trying to take pictures on the steps (which, we of course did). Oh, and it was here that I fell victim to my first (only!) street haggler. These men came up to us and made us these cheap bracelets that are for “protection and love” and then tried to get us to pay 20 euros for them! Ha! I told my guy I would give him 1 and he started demanding 5 – he got really mad! I told him he could have it back, but there was no way I was giving him more than 1. He got on my

nerves with his pushiness, so I shoved 2 50 cent pieces in his hand and we escaped (But Trista had paid one of them 5 euros!) To kill time before the Keats-Shelley museum opened back after siesta, we went shopping (darn☺). We started by walking through the Gucci, Prada, and Louis Vitton-ish stores. In March, I was in LA and visited Rodeo Drive, so I was already disenchanted with these stores. Frankly, it disgusts me that people pay so much money for clothes (and they aren't even very pretty usually!) But, it's a type of cultural study in itself, I guess. The clerks eyed us warily and I sadly didn't spot any stars here (although I saw Pierce Brosnan in Prada in Beverly Hills!) Then, we went into a store we could afford and I bought my "Rome outfit" there☺ By that time, the museum was opened back up, so Lisa and I picked our way back to the steps and into the museum.

Having visited Keats's home in Hampstead a few years ago and becoming intrigued by him and his beautiful love affair with Fanny Brawne (who he never got to marry because he came here and died ☹ but she wore his ring until she died – even after she married someone else!), this modest memorial was magical to me. I didn't pay as much attention to the Shelley portion of the museum – though there were some first editions of some of his works and Byron's "Don Juan", which I drooled over ☺ But Keats is the one who truly captivates me. I spent quite awhile sitting in his little room – the room he lived in from October of 1820 when he came to Rome and died in in February or 1821 – just a few months later. I put myself in Keats's shoes and imagined the way his Rome would have been much different from mine – not only in appearance, but also circumstance. I came here to study and experience the city – he came here to try to get healthy, but ultimately, to die. He came here, having lost many of the people he

cared about already – namely his brothers Tom and George (one to tuberculosis, which ran in their family, and the other to America) – and left his beloved sister, Fanny Keats, and one true love, Fanny Brawne, who waited steadfastly for his letters in Hampstead. Sitting in the tiny room and looking out the window over the Spanish Steps, he must have thought of her, longed for her. He must have thought about his life – his joys, his regrets. He wrote letters there – he declined further and died in the arms of his friend Joseph Severn, whom he lived with for those months in Rome. I learned that after his death, the Vatican authorities ordered that everything in the room, including the wallpaper, be burned because it was contaminated with tuberculosis. I did get to see the original ceiling tiles though. Other treasures I saw in the stuffy apartment where my love Keats spent his final days: several letters, a first edition of *Endymion*, portraits, and a life and death mask (kind of weird and cool at the same time).

After the museum, we rejoined the other girls and hiked over to the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria – home of the much anticipated Ecstasy of St. Theresa by Bernini (and one of Brown's 4 altars of science ☺). Brown describes the sculpture as "some sort of pornographic still life" – and I don't think that's exactly the way I'd describe it, but there is definitely something striking about the almost pleased look on Theresa's face as the angel prepares to thrust the arrow into her. The whole church was orante and beautiful – full of paintings and sculptures, but for some reason, I was drawn to just stare at the Ecstasy of St. Theresa. I also looked around and imagined the struggles of Langdon and Vittoria with the Hassassin and the huge fire engulfing one of the cardinals near the altar – which was difficult to do in a place so peaceful.



Quick fact – the subway stop I have gotten off at for the past two days is the Barberini stop – which, according to Brown, is a controversial stop because when they were putting it in, art historians were afraid they would topple the multi-ton obelisk in the center of the piazza with the digging so city planners removed the obelisk and that is why the Triton Fountain stands there now. In Bernini's day, the piazza contained an obelisk (for the Christian pilgrims to find the church) – Santa Maria della Vittoria is just a short walk from the piazza.

After leaving the church, we made our way back again. For dinner, I found a cheap café (because it was an expensive day!) and got a panini and coke for under three euros and have been content for the evening relaxing in my room, working and watching the MTV movie awards – more comfort ☺ Tomorrow I look forward to the Galleria Borghese (and hopefully a walk in the gardens!) and maybe a ballet recital. We only have 9 days left – can't believe it! Goodnight Rome!

6/20/04

Today has been a kind of slow day for me – my traveler's respite, if you will. This morning, Kat and I went to an internet café and booked our hostel for Venice. It was really stressful because it was hard to find something affordable, especially so late in the trip when funds are running low (another dilemma probably faced by many travelers!) – but we wound up booking one for only 25 total for each of us for both nights – and it has a free shuttle every ½ hour – so we won't have to pay for transportation. Next, we went to the train station and reserved our train ride for Friday morning at 10:55 – it made me

feel like such a seasoned traveler! And now I can relax and just make sure I save enough cash to eat there and buy some Venetian glass and a gondola ride! ☺ Can't wait!

I napped until class and then joined the group on an excursion to the Borghese Gallery, which was a truly wonderful place! In fact, there were so many Bernini sculptures and paintings by Caravaggio and others that it got a little overwhelming. It was a tremendous amount of beautiful art to take in – in a just as beautiful building – I think every ceiling was elaborately painted as well! I strained my neck admiring the ceilings! There was a lot of amazing art there, but my favorite was the Apollo and Daphne by Bernini. It's wonderful because you can literally see her hair and hand turning into the laurel tree as Apollo reaches out for his one true desire in vain. The Rape of Persephone is also brilliant – the detail is incredible. You can see his hands grabbing into the flesh of her thigh and every muscle in his body is tensed – it's incredibly powerful – it commands the attention of the main room. It's the first and last thing visitors see.

After absorbing much beauty from the galleria, I took a walk outside in the Villa Borghese gardens, much like the ones admired by Isabel Archer – “amongst the sweet meadow flowers and mossy marbles”. There was a certain peacefulness about it, but every so often, a bicycle-like vehicle containing 4 or 5 screaming tourists would whiz by and I would be again reminded what year I am living in.

For dinner, a large group of us went to a lovely pizzeria for Evita's birthday. In true Italian style, we feasted on pizza, pasta, (bruschetta for me☺), and a wonderful birthday dessert of balls of cream covered in chocolate. A delicious way to cap off an Italian weekend.

6/21/04

Here I am in the Santa Maria del Popolo church- I have chills – and it's not only because of the astounding mix of Renaissance and Baroque artwork that decorates this place – but also (even more so!) for the curious reason that this was the first altar of science in *Angels and Demons*. As I look to my left now, I see the Raphael/Bernini Chigi Chapel and my heart starts beating faster. It's interesting to question why we are so captivated and obsessed with history and the past – but now another question poses itself to me – why is it nearly as exciting (or more) for me to visit places (real) from a fictional novel? Once I entered the church, the first thing I wanted to do was locate the Chigi chapel and Bernini's Habbakuk sculpture. Once I did, I couldn't help but smile and my heart leapt in excitement as I noticed the pyramids on either side of the chapel and the "demon's hole" on the floor. I even did that annoying thing tourists do: I bent down and touched it. And I closed my eyes and imagined myself into *{interesting choice of words...not "in", but "into"}* the story and I got this incredible rush. I think the appeal is the desire to be a part of another world or another life – kind of like the reason we read books and watch movies. I think this goes for my new realization of my excitement over experiencing the settings of books *and* our desire to visit historical sites. It's also interesting to see that the writer really was telling the truth, especially in the case of Dan Brown. It's so cool to me that he visited all the places I'm visiting and got to know Rome well enough to notice all these tiny details, which, when I check, I find are all actually there, and weave them into a novel – so appealing! For example, in class we talk about the Egyptian obelisks all over Rome and how they signified churches to visit for traveling Christian pilgrims. I

learned that they are spoils of Rome's imperial plundering. Brown adds a whole new spin on them, making them, and other famous sculptures and bits of architecture, all pawns of the elusive Illuminati. It's fascinating. We also talked in class today about how architecture is used for communication – and my goodness! That's all this book is! That's why it's a fabulous companion for a modern traveler in Rome. He takes already famous and noteworthy sites around the city and gives them a whole new significance – communicating the path through Rome to the secret Illuminati lair. Back to Raphael and Bernini's Chigi Chapel in the Santa Maria del Popolo Church....

The first thing I looked for in the chapel was Bernini's Habakuk and the Angel statue – and I was shocked to see that the pointing finger of the angel (which guided Illuminati to the next altar of science) was broken off! Brown doesn't mention that in his book, so I wonder if someone read the book and stole it as a souvenir! I then noticed the 2 ten foot tall pyramids on either side of the chapel – uncharacteristic of the Christian Bernini (until we learn he is Illuminati). I also look up into the stunning cupola and notice the stars and zodiac signs and realize that it is a very "earthly" chapel, just as Brown describes. But maybe the most surreal part of the chapel for me was when I looked down and saw the covering to the "demon's hole" – the Chigi tomb where the first cardinal was found murdered. The lid depicts a skeleton carrying a tablet portraying a shining star (source of Illuminati) over a pyramid. I shivered and began to wonder if the path of Illuminati really does exist – it almost seems too accurate to be made up. Another creepy detail was that Brown describes the church as being under heavy construction in the novel. While the construction wasn't heavy and the church was open, there were areas inside the church that were blocked off for construction. It was eerie! Stepping out

of the church and into the sunlight of the Piazza del Popolo, I spot (of course!) a giant obelisk in the midst of the elliptical piazza.

Michael and I left the piazza and our way (like pros!) to the Coliseum via the metro – we had to change lines at Termini and everything – it was kind of intimidating at first, but I’ve got it figured out. Transportation is certainly different now than it would have been even for my darling Keats. For him to go from Piazza Popolo to the Coliseum and Roman Forum would have require quite a walk, but for us, only a few rides of the metro (combined with the small sacrifice of being crammed into a smelly, sticky car with a bunch of strangers and being constantly paranoid of pickpockets). But, despite all of that, I rather like the metro- I like the power it gives me – now that I’m more confident with it, I can go anywhere Rome within a short period of time – for free. Fabulous.

The sight of the Coliseum in the daytime was just as magnificent as the one at night – it created one of those “wow, I’m really in Rome! There’s the Coliseum” moments. I love those ☺ As I crossed the street and walked across the cobblestones next to the Coliseum and towards the Roman forum, I was reminded of one of my favorite quotes from *Portrait of a Lady*: “she had always been fond of history, and here was history in the stones of the street and the atoms of the sunshine.” I remember that as I was reading the book (especially at the beginning), Isabel Archer reminded me of me. She seemed to really soak in the history and essence of they city – and that’s what I feel like I have been doing. Also, like m, before leaving on her European journey, Isabel longs for a change of scene – and the decision to come to Europe makes her feel independent and liberated – something that I and probably lots of other travelers experience before leaving the country. Because of this connection I feel I have with

Isabel, I was sure to sit on a “prostrate column” in the forum by myself for awhile today and collect my thoughts as she does during her visit there. Again, like Isabel, I “went about in a repressed ecstasy of contemplation, often seeing in the things she looked at a great deal more than was there.”

Dan Brown also captured another observation I shared about the forum: he says that “the decaying columns looked like toppled gravestones in a cemetery that had somehow avoided being swallowed by the metropolis surrounding it.” That passage really resounded with me today because as I looked at the ruins and the Coliseum, I thought again how disjointed it seems to have this bustling city, and yet, right in the middle of traffic and hundreds of thousands of people, these colossal ruins. Then I started thinking about the concept of Rome as “one big museum” – and I think that’s a pretty accurate statement. With the wonderful Bernini fountain and historic obelisks in every piazza and ruins that can surprise one around any given corner – and the way that even the ceilings of museums are works of art – and churches are visited with awe and appreciation from even atheists due to the tremendous artwork they contain – but I don’t see this as a negative thing at all. I think it’s wonderful. To be surrounded by art and history at the same time as being in a thriving city is fantastic – what more could one ask for? I’ll keep thinking about this conclusion over my last few days in Rome and we’ll see if my opinion changes.

So anyway – the Roman forum. We entered on the Sacred Way (which reminded me of how the Romans “adapted” much from the Greeks) and walked through the forum. I didn’t have my map with me and we didn’t have a guide, so I wasn’t sure about a lot of the ruins – but we identified the Basilica Aemilia – which was actually being set up for

some sort of concert – so it was weird to see the ruins of an ancient administrative building littered with cables and speakers. We also, of course, identified the “curia” or Senate house. That was the most exciting part of the forum to me because I imagined Cicero giving speeches in that space (even though it has been burnt by fire twice and rebuilt). Kind of perpendicular to the Curia, we saw the Arch of Severus, which I remembered was the triumphal arch from 37 AD. The final part of the forum that we could correctly identify were the ruins of the House of Vestals – I think it was because I was so intrigued in class at the thought of those poor young girls at the age of 6 or 7 being forced into “vestalhood” – a 30 year service in the house that was basically a convent and they could have no relationships with men until all 30 years were over. The function of this was to preserve the flame that kept Rome healthy. But what a lonely 30 years that would be – and how could the girls even know how to interact with men upon their “release”? Ugh.

Today was capped off with another wonderful Italian dinner. I ordered spaghetti “checca” style – which I have learned means noodles with chunks of tomato (my favorite!) and mozzarella cheese – it was delectable. I’m now ready for bed – tomorrow is my big trip to the Vatican museums ☺ So I have to get up really early and get in line! Night ☺

6/22/04

I spent the morning and early part of the afternoon in the Vatican museums and St. Peter’s (amazing!). But before I talk about that, I want to talk about an epiphany I just had in class today. We were talking about *The Marble Faun* and I just perked up

completely and I noticed that most of the class seemed fairly unaffected. Then I started thinking about how I'm not so excited to visit places that emperors had been in (but that's really exciting for other people who have studied classics and that type of history) or seeing dead popes and saints – but that I get really excited to see the places that Henry James and Dan Brown have written about. – or the room that Keats lived and wrote and died in. And how just hearing Hawthorne's beginning page of *The Marble Faun* made me so excited to visit the Capitoline museum and get Rome through his eyes. I think that part of what draws us to the past is making connections not only to the *past*, but to other people in the past who we specifically admire. For some, it's artists or emperors or Popes – for me, it's writers. There is something inexorably intoxicating about reading one person's account (especially if this one person is someone you admire) of a place and then actually seeing it yourself and finding connections between how that person perceived it and how you perceive it – it's not only about the changes in physicality of the setting. By taking another perspective, we gain a window into another's very soul.

Anyway...Vatican City. Kat and I left the hotel at about 7:30, took the metro, and arrived to the line outside the Vatican museums around 8 am this morning. At just after 8:45 (right on schedule!), the line started moving and we got right inside and, in our desperate eagerness, went straight to the Sistine Chapel. It was magnificent beyond belief – it would be insulting for me to try to describe it in words because I can't come close to adequately expressing the wonderment it inspired in me. For once, I wasn't thinking about Dan Brown ☺ I spent nearly an hour in the chapel – just trying to soak it all in from different locations around the room. I think I could look at it everyday and never get tired of it. Today I learned that no matter how hard you try, you cannot see all



of the museums in one day – even when a lot of them are closed like they were today. So the Sistine Chapel was really even more magnificent than I ever imagined – when I first saw the panel where God imparts wisdom to Adam (with the famous fingers almost touching), I felt tears well up in my eyes! I also spotted a section of the drunken Noah where there is a big chunk missing – and I learned that it is because Michelangelo decided that the figures were too minutely drawn – interesting! If it hadn't been for my trusty guidebook, I might never have noticed, but now that I know, it sticks out a lot! Oh – I also realized that it's incredibly helpful to bring a guidebook with you to the Vatican museums because there are barely any signs anywhere (except in the Raphael rooms) to tell you about what you see.

After the Sistine chapel, we went back and walked through the Raphael rooms – where I got to see “The Transfiguration” – it's huge and GORGEOUS! – and you can get close enough to make out the brush strokes – I love that! We also went through the Borgia Apartments – where they now hang pieces from the Modern Art collection. That was really interesting to me because I saw a piece by Van Gogh, Diego Rivera, and a couple by Salvador Dali. It's interesting to see those artists right after seeing work by Michelangelo and Raphael – the Vatican certainly contains a very wide variety of art. I feel well rounded ☺

Next, we made our way to the Pinacoteca, which is a very large portrait gallery. This is actually where I saw “The Transfiguration”. In the Raphael rooms, I did get to see “The School of Athens” – which depicts Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Pythagoras, and even Raphael himself – it has become one of my favorite pieces. I like the way he depicted the different philosophers. For example, Plato and Aristotle are talking together

because they were pupil and teacher, and Pythagoras is teaching geometry, Socrates looks kind of mischievous and is lecturing a group of people like he did in the agora ☺ Also, in the Pinacoteca, I got to see Caravaggio's "Deposition" which was very invocative of emotion. I could feel the anguish of the people as they lay Jesus in the tomb. The rest of the gallery was fantastic too – I saw so many wonderful works of art and inspiration today. It's overwhelming to try and write this entry – so those are my highlights.

Deep breath. Then, I went to St. Peter's. This was huge for me. First, for the obvious reasons – it's incredible and beautiful. But second – it's a major setting in two of my books – *Angels and Demons* and *Cabal* by Michael Dibdin. The square: enormous and definitely humbling. Because of Dan Brown, I was sure to note the elliptical shape and huge obelisk (of Caligula) in the center, flanked by a fountain on each side, in perfect elliptical distance of course (thanks to Bernini). I forgot to look for the elliptical "West Ponente" of Bernini in the square, but I will when I go for the Papal audience in the morning. The square was full of people, so it wasn't tough to imagine it packed with media, like in Brown's book. The square was impressive – then I went inside the basilica. Oh WOW. Like nothing I've ever seen. I've heard people talk about disappointment in it, and I just can't comprehend the possibility of that. My first view of the basilica was actually from inside the cupola because we decided to climb to the top of the dome – I'm so glad we did! It was so cool to look down on the basilica from above – this time I was looking to the very top (where tourists are not allowed) and thinking of the opening scenes of *Cabal* – I decided that it would, indeed (as Dibdin mentions) be a poetic (if morbid) place to commit suicide. I tried not to imagine people to their deaths, but went back inside the walls and climbed higher to reach the top and my outside view

of Rome. It was a surreal climb – at some points, the walls are really narrow and it slants! On the way back down, I got dizzy on all the spiral stairs and started to feel a little claustrophobic, but it was cool at the same time to reach out and touch the wall and know what beauty lay on the other side.

Once I got to the top outside and took one look at the view – all the huffing and puffing and burning I felt in my calves was worth it! I saw the whole city! I picked out the Castel St. Angelo right away – next to the Tiber. And I could see the Alban Mountains in the distance. I also got my only glimpse of the rest of Vatican City from there. It was so surreal because it was so green and manicured and empty! Dibdin talks about the Vatican being too perfect and calls it “Rome devoid of Romans” – I really got that sense when I looked down on it from St. Peter’s. Bizarre. “like a replica everyone was conspiring to pass off as the real thing”

Once we got safely to ground, we had just a few minutes to explore the basilica before we had to head for class (I intend to come back on Monday and spend more time carefully exploring because there is so much to see!) I got to see Michelangelo’s stunning “Pieta” (which is encased in glass because in 1972, some psycho started yelling that he was Jesus and attacked it with a hammer – damaging part of Mary’s face). Of course, I also saw Bernini’s flamboyant Balacchino, which stands almost directly under the dome – and his eerie Alexander VII monument with the “beckoning skeleton” Dibdin mentions, holding the hourglass and reminding us of mortality. Under the monument, I noticed the door used by the Swiss Guard to remove the body in *Cabal*. {Digression: all day, I kept looking around the Vatican and imagining all the millions of secret passageways they must have – thanks, Brown ☺} I almost ran through the crypts quickly

on the way out – I mostly wanted to see the gold tomb dedicated to Saint Peter (which I found!). I wish so much that I could get a special permit to get down into the necropolis “terra santa” and look for the tomb of St. Peter. He is supposedly directly below the dome – on the real Vatican Hill all the way underground. But even few clergy have been there and it’s very easy to get lost – a maze of crypts, Brown tells us – how curious does that make one? Drives me crazy! I really want to go down and see if there really is something in the spot where Brown says there is! *The* Christian relic. The Vatican was literally built upon St. Peter – “the rock” – according to Brown. So anyway, that thought has been driving me crazy all day! And I get to go back tomorrow for the Papal audience and look for West Ponente and poke around St. Peter’s some more and maybe the Castel.

For dinner, we ate in the Jewish ghetto – which was good because I had never eaten “Jewish” (?) food before. Bobby got a meat plate for an appetizer and it was really good. I ordered spinach and some meat ravioli – it was really good, but expensive and small portions. It was a nice walk, though. We saw the Forum and the Coliseum and the Tiber at night. More tomorrow!

6/23/04

I’m sitting and waiting to see the Pope give a sermon at the Vatican. There are tons of people crammed into this church ( I don’t understand why they the huge and beautiful St. Peter’s basilica and they use this little tiny church for the Papal audience) Anyway, on my way in, I found the West Ponente in St. Peter’s square ☺ Sure enough – five gusts of wind, perfect elliptical shape, and two stars. Dan Brown brilliance.

The audience was interesting. I'm not Catholic – and I tend to be kind of cynical towards a lot of religious ceremonies, but the Pope got to me. When he spoke English and welcomed people from the United States by name and wished us a happy time, I actually teared up. Something pulled at my emotions – whether it was something spiritual or just the fact that he was so old and feeble – and so beloved and seemingly noble, I don't know. I left shortly after that, though. With all the people crammed in, it kind of destroyed any religious experience I could have had. People waved flags and talked constantly – it felt more like a circus than a religious service. So I left. And then, I got to have one of the best and most liberating experiences I've had so far on this trip – I spent time walking the streets of Rome by myself! Granted, it was only a few hours, but it felt so good. The people I was with had to head back to the hotel for class, and I wanted to see the Castel Sant'Angelo, so I did ☺ There I was, walking down the Via D. Conciliazione, with St. Peter's as my backdrop – all day by myself ☺ Loved it! I walked briskly and pretended I was a Roman. Nobody bothered me and I never once felt unsafe or lost. I stopped in a bookstore and picked up some reading for next week's plane ride and headed to the Castel. It was magnificent. The first thing I spotted was Bernini's angel perched atop the roof, pointing his sword straight down (indicating, according to Dan Brown, the Illuminati lair). I walked around the castle, trying to imagine all its various uses – of course, Hadrian's tomb, a fortress, a papal hideout, a prison for enemies of the church, and now, a museum. I considered going inside for a tour, but I didn't really have enough time and I doubt I would be able to see the parts I would want to see from *Angels and Demons*. I also thought of Il passeto, the passageway that leads underground from the Vatican to the castle and wondered if I had been walking over it on

my way to the castle! Then I walked down Bernini's Bridge of Angels and looked up at the castle and then to St. Peter's in the distance. All by myself, I was able to imagine myself in the book, racing against time. "Let angels guide you on your lofty quest" – those words echoed eerily in my mind, even in broad daylight, amongst tourists and men selling purses and sunglasses, as I walked back across the bridge towards the castle. It loomed ahead of me, full of history, secrets, and mystery. Satisfied, I headed back toward St. Peter's and then successfully rode the metro back to our hotel. I'm so proud of myself ☺

Alone at last  
 with Keats  
 just a few precious moments  
 to sit with him  
 in this final rest  
 having already visited his room  
 and felt the same bittersweet  
 Yearning  
 he felt all those years ago  
 for a love far across the sea  
 that I have dreamed about  
 now  
 I find that we are  
 Finally

not so distant.

The Protestant cemetery was wonderful. I really don't want to spoil my own experience there by trying to put it into prose except to say – it is peaceful and beautiful – a sanctuary in the middle of Rome. I spent 20 minutes alone with Keats and the only way for me to express it was the poem I wrote there. Beautiful.

6/24/04

Last night, I went to the Piazza del Popolo to see the opera! It was such a great time! The show was *The Magic Flute* and they set up a stage and speakers and three huge screens and we just camped out on our beach towels in the piazza and enjoyed the opera for free. We got there at about 7:00, but by the time the show started (9:30), it was packed! It was exciting to be in a place where so many people get excited about opera! And it was an absolutely perfect night for such an event! As a traveler, I felt really lucky to get to have the cultural experience of sitting outside with hundreds of other people and getting to see a great opera – for free! And apparently this is something they do every year, and it's a big deal! There are usually celebrities present. As a matter of fact, Brad Pitt was supposed to be in attendance last night – he wound up not coming – but Stephanie and I got to see him and George Clooney at their hotel down the street anyway ☺ They are in town shooting *Ocean's 12* and I was so excited to see them that I couldn't stop shaking! But anyway, the opera was delectable. Despite the fact that sitting on the ground was more than a little uncomfortable, I loved every minute. The story is very romantic and the singers were some of the best I've heard – the Queen of the night was

absolutely incredible. The whole night was too much ☺ It was also fun getting home. Due to the large amounts of people at the opera, the subway was packed on the way home! Stephanie, Lisa, and I were smashed against the back wall and provided entertainment/annoyance (take your pick!) to everyone else in our train because we were a little slap happy. Then, we got off at Termini (finally!) We ran to the steps – just for the heck of it ☺ People were clapping and yelling things at us. It was great.

Today is my last day in Rome before I go to Venice in the morning. After class, I'm going to check out the Capitoline museum and then come back and get packed and study for my test. Big day tomorrow ☺ Yay Venice!

“It (Rome experience) is a vague sense of ponderous remembrances; a perception of such weight and density in a bygone life, of which this spot was the center, that the present moment is pressed down or crowded out, and our individual affairs and interests are but half as real here as elsewhere.” – Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun*

These days, the view from the room of the Dying Gaul in the Capitoline museum is breathtaking, but different from what Nathaniel Hawthorne describes in *The Marble Faun*. One can still see the steps (which I walked up to get here), and the arch of Septimus Severus with the Forum and Coliseum, and, way off in the distance, the Alban Mountains in the background. Unfortunately, the washer women have been replaced with hundreds of tourists in vividly colored t-shirts jabbering in 12 different languages and the Forum is not so “desolate” anymore. However, as I sit here, perched out over the city, I do get that pronounced feeling of awareness of history which Hawthorne ever so



eloquently describes. Perhaps even more so – the blaring evidence of modernity strikes a contrast that seems to enhance the importance of the past.

I also observed the “Dying Gladiator”, as Hawthorne calls it in his time – and he truly did seem to be the “most pathetic figure”. I sauntered through the museum, enjoying it thoroughly; I saw some Caravaggio paintings, lovely porcelains and massive ancient statues like the broken remnants of Constantine II, and even the matriarchal symbol of Rome: the She-wolf with Romulus and Remus. However, I never found “the marble faun.” I looked all over and could never find quite what Hawthorne describes. I saw lots of fauns with lion’s skins draped over them, and some were holding a pipe or leaning on a tree stump, but I never could find exactly the right match to Hawthorne’s description.

Walking back to the metro in the Roman sun after my museum visit, I gazed at the Coliseum and realized that I will probably not see it again before we leave next Tuesday. I had a silent moment with it before entering the darkness of the station. As my journey is coming to an end, I am learning another facet of traveling – the mixed feelings one experiences at the end. On one hand, I’m excited to return home to my family and friends and the comforts and conveniences of a “normal” life (although, my life is never really very normal ☺). On the other hand, it will be hard to leave the people I have spent every moment of my life for the past 5 weeks with and to leave behind these wonderful foreign places and all the adventures that accompany being a traveler. Just as I miss the wonderful concept of “free refill” now, I will miss the concept of “siesta” in a week or so. And so on. I guess this is one of the experiences every traveler must face. It’s just never easy to say goodbye.

“maybe I’ll tell you all about it when I’m in the mood to lose my way – with words .....you should have seen that sunrise with your own eyes. It brought me back to life. You’ll be with me next time I got outside, no more 3 x 5’s.....didn’t have a camera by my side this time, hoping I could see the world with both my eyes....” – john mayer